

bill. In this appropriations bill, we were not able to come out with any legislation that dealt with the price crisis, the whole question of concentration of power that dealt with what is happening to the family farmers.

Is the bankruptcy bill the pending business after the morning business? Will we bring the bankruptcy bill to the floor with opportunities for Senators to introduce amendments that will make a difference for family farmers? Will we have that opportunity?

Mr. LOTT. I cannot answer that question at this time.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Reserving the right to object, I will do everything I can between now and however long it takes, if I am the last person standing, to insist I have a right as a Senator from Minnesota to come to the floor and introduce legislation that will speak to the pain and suffering of family farmers in my State. I will not stop colleagues from speaking in morning business, but forthwith I will have to stay on the floor until I have a chance to make a difference for farmers.

Mr. LOTT. I wonder if the Senator might want to take this up in the Agriculture Committee and with Members of the Senate who are involved and work with the appropriators on both sides of the aisle. They are working now to try to deal with these issues.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Reserving the right to object, Democrats have not been involved in that Appropriations Committee to my knowledge in terms of any meeting over the last week. Second, with all due respect to the majority leader, we are an amending body. Quite often we come to the floor with amendments. We especially come to the floor with amendments when we are dealing with a crisis situation.

We are dealing with a crisis situation in rural America. It is not business as usual. I am going to insist that I have the right to come to this floor with amendments that will speak to farmers in Minnesota and around the country to make a difference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DORGAN. Reserving the right to object, I will not object, but I want to correct a misimpression on the floor. The conference committee in the agricultural appropriations area has not been meeting. I am a conferee. I would know if they are meeting. There is no meeting. It adjourned in the middle of last week. There has been no meeting since. I read the speculation in the newspapers and in the press that there have been agreements made. In fact, one suggestion indicated the majority leader had signed off on certain things. I have no idea who is reaching these agreements. I have no idea whether that is accurate.

It is not accurate to say the conference committee is meeting. The conference committee is not meeting. No Democratic member of the conference committee is able to meet because the conference is not in session.

I will not object either, but I will say there are some who think it is appropriate to have a conference between the House and the Senate on something this important—and it is one of the most important issues to my State dealing with this farm crisis—and it be done behind closed doors with one party in secret, and an agreement is brought to the floor of the Senate which says take it as it is or leave it.

That is not the way it will work. I do not have the capability to make things happen that I want to have happen, but I can slow things down.

I wanted to correct the impression left when the majority leader said the conference has been meeting. The conference has not been meeting. It adjourned nearly a week ago. We passed our bill in the Senate August 4. It is now October. With the urgent crises in farm country, we have slow motion going on and no conference at all. I hope the majority leader can agree with me that the way we are supposed to legislate is to have a conference; that when we call meetings with conferees, we have Republicans and Democrats there, we debate the issues, and we take votes. I wanted to correct the misimpression there has been a conference committee meeting. I am a conferee. That committee has not been meeting, and it should.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 68

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following morning business the Senate proceed to consideration of the joint resolution at the desk making continuing appropriations for the Federal Government; further, that there be 2 hours of debate between the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, with no amendments or motions in order; and, following the conclusion or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to third reading and adoption of the joint resolution, all without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, has this request been cleared with the minority leader?

Mr. LOTT. Yes, it has been cleared with the minority leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I thank my colleague, Senator BYRD. I thank you for your patience.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

DROUGHT EMERGENCY IN WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I will be very brief. I should be in a markup of

the Appropriations Committee on the Labor-HHS appropriations bill right at this moment.

Mr. President, as we quickly approach the end of Fiscal Year 1999, there is a portion of the American population that is not faring very well. The small family farmers of the North-Eastern and Mid-Atlantic States have been struggling to survive a fifteen-month-long drought. With all fifty-five of our counties receiving an emergency drought declaration on August 2 from the Secretary of Agriculture, farmers in West Virginia are no exception. These farmers have been waiting for a significant and timely response to their emergency, a feeling I imagine would be similar to dialing nine-one-one and getting a busy signal.

Yet, over the years, this Congress has responded quickly to provide the necessary resources to help the victims of national disasters, not only in this country, but around the world. From the \$1 billion for the victims of Mount Saint Helens in 1980; to the \$2.7 billion for the victims of Hurricane Hugo in 1989; to the nearly \$3 billion for the Loma Prieta earthquake victims, also in 1989; to the more than \$10 billion for Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki in 1992; to the \$6.8 billion in disaster funds for victims of the Mississippi floods in the Summer of 1993; to the North Ridge earthquake victims in 1994, for which almost \$12 billion was appropriated. Throughout the 1990's, emergency disaster assistance has also been provided to the victims of tornadoes, tropical storms, droughts, floods, wildfires, blizzards, and so on.

In 1999, emergency aid has gone to Central American and the Caribbean nations needing assistance with reconstruction after hurricane damage, to Kosovo military and humanitarian operations, and to American farmers suffering from low commodity prices. I voted for all of these. I have been willing to support emergency aid in these instances—all of them. However, I cannot understand why the drought emergency goes ignored. I cannot understand why we are not answering the emergency calls of long-suffering Northeast and Mid-Atlantic farmers.

The drought has devastated—devastated—the lives of thousands of family farmers in this region. I know that the word devastated is used so often that one expects it to be pure hyperbole, but West Virginia farmers work hard on land most often held in the same family for generations. They farm an average of 194 acres in the rough mountain terrain, and they earn an average of just \$25,000 annually. That is \$25,000 annually for 365 days of never-ending labor. Farming is an every-day, every-week, every-month, 365-day operation every year with no time off. West Virginia farmers average \$68.50 a day for days that begin at dawn and run past sunset. These small family farmers are the last to ask for assistance. They are hard-working, they are self-reliant individuals. They